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THE AMATEUR STAGE.

"MY PETER!"

A COMEDIETTA,

IN ONE ACT,

By ANDRE ARNOLD.

341

WITH THE CAST OF CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, SIDES OF ENTRANCES AND EXIT, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ, TIME OF REPRESENTATION, ETC., ETC.

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"MY PETER!"

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PETER LAMBKIN.
GEORGE BALMER.
MRS. ALCESTIS LAMBKIN.
MRS. DORA BALMER.
MRS. FLOWERDALE.
LUCY, *A Servant.*

TIME.—PRESENT.

Time of Representation.—Forty-five Minutes.

COSTUMES.—MODERN.

PROPERTIES.

Carpet covering stage. Curtains to French window, C. A screen, opened, on the R. A round table, C. Vases, books and flowers on it. Footstool R.C. A small table between the doors L. Newspaper on table. A pack of cards in drawer of L. table. Two easy chairs R. and L. Sofa U.E.L. Embroidery on frame for Mrs. BALMER. Two cigars. Eau de cologne. Bouquet for MRS. FLOWERDALE. Short pipe in case and match box for PETE. Fullers earth (wet) for mud. A battered hat. Two lighted candles.

Copyrighted 1877.

"MY PETER!"

Scene.—*A Handsomely Furnished Drawing-Room in a Villa at Brighton. French window* C., *through which may be seen the Esplanade and sea beyond. Door* T.E.L. *Door* S.E.L. *Door* S.E.R. *Sofa* U.E.L. *Screen* U.E.R. *Table* C., *on which are vases and flowers. Table between the two doors* L. *Clock on it. Two easy chairs* R. *and* L. *Other chairs on the scene.*

Mrs. Balmer *and* Mrs. Lambkin *discovered.*

Mrs. L. *(Reading in easy chair,* R.) Ridiculous! How man could write—or woman could utter such demoralizing sentiments is incredible. Just listen, Dora. *(Reads.)* "Julia laid her head on her husband's bosom, and looking with the confidence of a child in his face, said, 'I am yours—yours, dearest Charles; my whole being seems absorbed in that sweet consciousness. Guide, sustain, and cherish me, for I have neither will, thought, nor desire that is not yours." *(Rising and flinging the book away angrily on* L. *table.)* There! Such detestable principles would subvert domestic government, and destroy the independence which a woman should never surrender to a conjugal tyrant.

Mrs. B. *(Seated in easy chair,* L., *embroidering and laughing.)* I know your system of matrimonial discipline does not agree with those doctrines of passive obedience to one's 'lord and master.'

Mrs. L. Which, in spite of my advice to the contrary, you have adopted and practise towards *your* husband. It is treason to the rights of woman to humble yourself as you do to a man, who,

like all his egotistical sex, is only too ready to believe that women were sent into the world to serve and obey their proud 'masters.'

(Laughs satirically, and sits as before.

Mrs. B. That is a fault with which you cannot reproach yourself, Alcestis. Ah! my dear! you rule poor Mr. Lambkin——

Mrs. L. *(Quickly interrupting.)* As a woman who respects her rightful position in the matrimonial scale should rule one of the *creatures*. From the day we were married I have kept a tight rein upon "*my Peter*;" and although a little restiff and stubborn at first, I gradually subdued the little fellow, brought down his spirit, tamed his temper, till now—yes—I can lead him like a lap-dog in a silken thread.

Mrs. B. Which you do without consulting his will.

Mrs. L. His will? Ha, ha, ha! What a simpleton you must be to imagine "my Peter" has any will but mine. No! no! that little tiff we had on our wedding-day settled the entire question. Peter wanted to smoke a cigar after dinner, but I didn't, that was enough. I forbade the vulgar indulgence; he remonstrated; I remained calm, but firm, firm! At last he succumbed, and the cigar was flung out of the window. That was the *first* lesson I taught him. Ah! he has *never* forgotten it!

Mrs. B. *(Aside.)* It is not likely he should. *(Rises—aloud.)* But all men have faults, and my husband, I know, has his share.

Mrs. L. *(Rises.)* That's good. I'm glad you admit your idol to have *some* defects. For instance, he has a horrid temper.

Mrs. B. A little hasty sometimes, but then his ill-humor don't last long.

Mrs. L. He won't bear contradiction.

Mrs. B. For which reason I *never* contradict him.

Mrs. L. He is scarcely ever at home.

Mrs. B. Perhaps he is happier abroad. I am no advocate for a man to be condemned to perpetual domestic imprisonment with his wife. Ever shadowing her very footsteps and perpetually tying himself to her apron strings.

Mrs. L. *(Whispering quietly to her.)* I protest, Dora, you're the most provoking creature in existence. What would you say now, if your husband did shadow some woman's footsteps and preferred the society of another rather than his own wife?

Mrs. B. *(Starts up.)* Another! *(With an effort.)* He should hear no reproach from my lips. *(Sits again.*

Mrs. L. Oh, this is too much! You'll have the finger of scorn pointed at you child, while your humility will be cited as a frightful example to the whole wedded world; matrimonial reformers will be questioning the divine rights of woman, and then advocating equality in the married state. Shocking—shocking principles! Horrid! *(Sits R.*

Mrs. B. I shall trust to them, nevertheless, to correct my husband's faults:—of his *moral truth* I cannot entertain a doubt.

Mrs. L. *(Laughs heartily.)* It's a pity to disturb such a sweet, confiding dream, lest it be converted into a nightmare, but I've observed Mr. Balmer for the last month—ever since we came to live together in this charming marine villa.

Mrs. B. *(Sighs.)* I thought we should be so happy together.

Mrs. L. So we are, my dear, perfectly happy: at least, I speak for myself and "my Peter," upon whom I constantly keep an eye —*two* eyes! I can see him at this moment playing at duck and drake on the beach.

Mrs. B. Ah! innocent pleasures for innocent minds. But you were going to say something about George, my George.

Mrs. L. True, my dear, *your* George. You must not be hurt by my candor, but everybody perceives that Mr. Balmer pays particular attention to that Mrs. Flowerdale.

Mrs. B. Well, I do not desire to monopolize my husband's attention.

Mrs. L. That is very kind of you, I'm sure, especially as Mrs. Flowerdale thinks,—and I dare say Mr. Balmer also thinks—she is irresistible.

Mrs. B. I admit she is young, handsome, witty——

Mrs. L. And a widow—*and* a widow, my dear, don't forget that. Ah! *(Shakes her head ominously.*

Mrs. B. I cannot forget she is my friend.

Mrs. L. The greater the danger, my dear! Where women are concerned, show me a friend and I'll show you a monster! I don't mean to say that Mrs. Flowerdale meditates the conquest of your husband, but nature made her a woman, accident made her a widow, and art has made her a coquette; her instincts and her education compel her to angle for, hook and land every victim that comes in her way.

Mrs. B. Still I have confidence in my husband's moral principles, and in the efficacy of my own system.

Mrs. L. An abominable system—which would render poor married women slaves to the will of their despotic '*lords.*' *(Laughs.)* Stay, are you willing to test the merits of our respective modes of treatment—your sedatives against my tonics.

Mrs. B. Yes! my syrups against your bitters! Ha! ha! Yes, I am quite ready to do so, and to wager a dozen pairs of gloves upon the issue. But how do you propose to make the trial?

Mrs. L. You know that I have arranged to go to London this evening, to my mother's; now nothing would be easier than for you to make some excuse to accompany me and return with me to-morrow. *Your* husband won't object you may be certain.

Mrs. B. Perhaps not. But I don't see clearly the object of this journey.

Mrs. L. A feint, my dear! We'll play *foxy*—remain here in ambush and pounce upon the lambs! So, while our spouses ima-

gine us chatting cosily at St. John's Wood, we will be watching their little proceedings at home. *(Laughs.*

Mrs. B. (Laughs.) Capital! I agree to the stratagem—for I know my George will remain heart whole, and come out of the trial like gold from the furnace. *(Rises.*

Mrs. L. (Rises.) And "*my Peter*" like steel from the anvil. *(Looks through window,* C., *off* L.) Hush! I see my precious little partner returning from the beach.

Mrs. B. And mine sauntering this way from his evening stroll.

(Looks out C., *off* R. MRS. LAMBKIN *resumes her seat,* R.

Enter PETER LAMBKIN, *through* C. *window, from* L.

Peter. Ah, lovey! I hope I have not out-stayed my liberty. Mrs. Balmer, how d'ye do?

Mrs. L. (Looking at her watch.) Five minutes past the time I allowed you, Mr. Lambkin.

Peter. (R.C.) I'm *so* sorry my love, but duck and drake is such an exciting pastime that——

Mrs. L. That you forgot your wife's commands, sir.

Peter. No, really. Your commands are always implicitly obeyed by me—but—a—*(whispers her aside)*—forgive me this time and I promise never to trangress again.

(MRS. LAMBKIN *turns away from him.*

Enter GEORGE BALMER, *through* C. *window, from* R., *smoking a cigar.*

George. What a splendid evening for a cigar. *(Comes down* L.C. *Perceiving* MRS. LAMBKIN.) Oh! I beg pardon, Mrs. Lambkin, you don't like smoking. *(Flings his cigar out of the window.)* I forgot. There!

Mrs. L. 'Tis a practice I detest, Mr. Balmer. I have forbidden "my Peter" *ever* to smoke.

Peter. Yes, it's a dreadful bad habit. *(Aside to* GEORGE.) I had a weed on the sly after dinner.

George. What a number of fine girls were promenading this evening.

Peter. Delicious! (MRS. LAMBKIN *looks astonished*—PETER *recollects himself.)* Hem! That is—*I* don't know; I never notice fine "gals."

(MRS. BALMER *takes her husband's hat, and offers to kiss him; he kisses her carelessly on the cheek.*

George. There, get away, you little noodle.

Mrs. B. How your hat wants brushing.

(She goes up the stage, L., *smoothing his hat with her handkerchief.*

Peter. (Aside.) Mrs. Lambkin never smooths my hat. She prefers rumpling my hair.

Mrs. L. Place that footstool for me, Peter.

Peter. *(Placing a footstool for* MRS. LAMBKIN.) There! Put your dear little tootsicums there, my love. What a pretty pair they are. Hah! the artist who makes those delicious little boots ought to bless his lucky stars. *(Aside to* GEORGE.) There was a lovely pink pair on the esplanade this afternoon, but Mrs. Lambkin was with me, so I could only steal a glance at the lambs.

(GEORGE *takes a newspaper from* L. *table, throws himself into easy chair* L., *and glances over it listlessly.*

Mrs. L. *(Calls.)* Peter!

Peter. *(Runs to her.)* Yes, lovey.

Mrs. L. Fetch my eau-de-Cologne from my dressing-table.

(PETER *runs off* S.E.L.

George. *(Yawns.)* Nothing stirring; general stagnation. Opera closed; clubs empty; Rotten-row a desert, and Margate as a watering-place has degenerated into a mob. I think I must take a few days' cruising round the coast.

Mrs. L. With Mrs. Balmer, of course? H-hem!

George. *(Looking irresolutely at his wife, who comes down* C.) With—hem!—Dora? I—a—well, I did not think—a——

Mrs. B. No, no! I'm a wretched sailor. George will enjoy himself much better without me.

George. *(Rising.)* Oh, I shall do very well, and you can amuse yourself with your friends and the German band on the esplanade. Nothing like a German band to raise a woman's spirits. *(Aside.)* It gives me the collywobbles! *(Aloud—vexed.)* We shall be very happy apart. *(Aside.)* She lets me do just as I like. Why the deuce will she never oppose me!

Mrs. B. *(Aside.)* I adore the sea, and with him it would have been delightful, *(sighs)* but he has no desire for my society. No matter, I can be patient, the time will come—it must come, when my love will conquer his indifference. *(Retires to window again.*

Re-enter PETER LAMBKIN, L., *with eau-de-Cologne.*

Peter. Here, my dear, is your eau-de-Cologne. *(Gives the bottle to* MRS. LAMBKIN. GEORGE *takes his hat and is about to quit the apartment.)* Where are you going, Balmer? Can't we have a quiet game of whist, hey? You shall have Alcestis for your partner, she holds tremendous cards—the majority trumps and knows how to play them, too. She generally gets all the honors, and knows how to make the odd trick! A wonderful woman!

George. I am very sorry, my dear fellow, I must relinquish so powerful a hand. *(Turns to* MRS. LAMBKIN.) The fact is, I am engaged to play a match at billiards, this evening, so that I cannot possibly——

Enter LUCY, T.E.L.

Lucy. Mrs. Flowerdale, ma'am.

Mrs. B. Oh! show her in, Lucy.

George. *(Pulling down his hat, and aside.)* Mrs. Flowerdale! hem! *(Aloud.)* I was going to say I am in no particular hurry, my dear; I can wait, if it is to oblige you, *(looking at his watch)* for another hour.

Mrs. L. Oh, pray don't think of sacrificing yourself to our stupid rubber, Mr. Balmer. *You have another game to play.* *(Aside.)* Hu-u-m!

George. *(Embarrassed.)* Not the slightest sacrifice, my dear madam, I am an enthusiast in whist.

Enter MRS. FLOWERDALE, T.E.L.

Mrs. L. *(Looking significantly at* MRS. FLOWERDALE—*Aside.)* When the Queen of Hearts turns up.

Peter. *(Aside to* MRS. LAMBKIN.) The Queen of Hearts, my dear? Where? Let me have a look. *(Looks round.*

Mrs. L. *(Pulls him back—aside to him.)* Look this way, if you please, sir.

Mrs. B. I'm delighted to see you, dear Louisa, though the pleasure must be brief. I am going to London by the next train and sha'n't return till to-morrow.

(GEORGE *and* PETER *express surprise.*

Peter. }
George. } *(Together and pleased.)* Going to London!

Mrs. B. With Mrs. Lambkin, dear George. I have to order a dress at my milliner's, and we have arranged to sleep at her mother's to-night.

Peter. (R.C., *suddenly interested.)* Hey! My Alcestis going for the night! Hoor—— (MRS. LAMBKIN *surprised, looks at* PETER, *who suddenly checks himself, then in a melancholy tone.)* Aah! Then our game of whist cannot come off, unless Balmer and I play double dummy.

George. Like double donkeys!

Mrs. B (L., *to* GEORGE.) If you have any objection to my going, Georgy, why——

George. Objection, my popsy wopsy, none in the world—go, by all means. Go, and hear the German band, 'twill do you good. *(Turning to* MRS. FLOWERDALE, *sighs.)* I must try to support existence in your absence.

Peter. But we shall be very miserable till they return—shall we not, Balmer?

George. Dreadfully miserable.

(Takes a rose from a bouquet which MRS. FLOWERDALE *carries; kisses it and places it in his button-hole. They go up the stage* L., *and converse apart.* MRS. LAMBKIN *beckons* MRS. BALMER *down to front,* R.C. PETER *takes a pack of cards out of a box on the console table* L., *sits at table* C., *and begins to arrange them for a game of Patience.*

Peter. *(Aside.)* A game at Patience may depress my exuberant joy.

(He prances and kicks about under the table when MRS. LAMBKIN *is not looking.*

Mrs. L. *(Aside to* MRS. BALMER.) Well, am I right or not? Your husband neglects and treats you with indifference—scarcely notices you when he enters the room—proposes a yachting cruise without you, and *invents* a match at billiards to escape from your society; worse still, he makes love to your friend—the widow—a grass widow—before your very face. (GEORGE *and* MRS. FLOWERDALE *laugh, up stage,* L.) I dare say they are laughing at you this moment. Now look at "my Peter," playing Patience like a stupid little goose as he is. That is the way to keep these men under, my dear. There is an example of my system of keeping a husband down.

Mrs. B. *(Aside.)* Down indeed! poor fellow.

Mrs. L. *(Aside to* MRS. BALMER.) Confess that you have lost your wager, and that a dozen pairs of Jouvin's best are mine.

Mrs. B. *(Aside to* MRS. LAMBKIN.) Wait—the trial isn't over yet. I have still confidence in the magic of kindness, and the efficacy of my system over yours.

Peter. *(Thumps the table with his fist.)* There, now! If I only dared to swear, I would emphatically say, hang it! I wish that Queen was out of the way.

Mrs. L. Come, Mrs. Balmer, or we shall be late for the train.

Mrs. B. Good night, dear George.

George. Bye, bye, Dora. *(Kisses his hand carelessly to her. To* MRS. FLOWERDALE.) Must *you* go too, Mrs. Flowerdale? *(In an undertone to her.)* Forsake me at such a moment? Cruel woman!

Mrs. F. *(Aside to him.)* Hush! I have something to say for your private ear alone—I will return after your wife has left.

(Goes up stage, L.

Enter LUCY, C., *with cloaks and bonnets.*

Lucy. The train starts in seven minutes, ladies. Here are your cloaks and bonnets. The fly is at the door.

Mrs. L. Oh, dear! we have not a moment to spare.

(They hurry on their cloaks and bonnets; MRS. FLOWERDALE *assisting* MRS. BALMER. *Exit* LUCY, C.

Mrs. L. *(Calls.)* Peter!

Peter. *(Thumping the table.)* Oh, hang it!

Mrs. L. *Peter!* did you hear?

Peter. *(Looks up.)* Did you speak, my dear?

Mrs. L. You may kiss me and say good-bye.

Peter. May I? *(Rises and kisses her.)* Ah! Nectar and barley sugar are nothing to it. *(Smacks his lips, aside.)* The sugar's melting though!

Mrs. L. Observe my injunctions, and be in bed at *ten*.

Peter. I shall have one leg between the sheets at the first stroke of the clock, my popsy wopsy. But I should like before retiring to my lonely couch to take a walk on the esplanade. Just to ask, "What are the wild waves saying?"

Mrs. L. Humph! On the esplanade? *(Looks at him suspiciously.)* Go, then! "My Peter" may go! *(Aside.)* *I* shall be there, too. *(Aloud.)* Come, Dora.

(MRS. BALMER *and* MRS. LAMBKIN *exeunt* C., *off* L., *followed by* MRS. FLOWERDALE.

Mrs. F. *(Aside to* GEORGE, *as she goes out.)* Wait!

(Exit C., *off* L. *The evening begins to fall. Lights half down.*

Peter. *(Jumping up, dancing and singing.)* Ri-toll-loll-de-roll-de-roll. She's gone—she's off! *(Flings the cards about, and sings:*

"The day is past, the night's our own,
So let us feast the soul;
Should any pain or care remain,
Why, drown it in the bowl."

George. *(Sits* L.) You're in high spirits, Lambkin.

Peter. *(Crosses to* R.) Why shouldn't I? I'm a free man—an emancipated Briton! *(Sits on* C. *table.)* When the cat's away, the mouse may play. *(Sings.)* Ri-toll-loll-de-roll-de-roll. I'm going to join a jolly party at the hotel; brandy and water and cigars. Bachelor days revived! You'll come, Balmer? We'll make a night of it, my boy!

George. No! I shall stop at home. *(Crosses to* R., *and sits.*

Peter. Oh, d—n it, you have no pluck! You don't appreciate the luxury of getting rid of your wife. *(Lighting a short pipe with a match.)* Nothing like it, old fellow, to be a free young blood again. To live by the cross of your sword, and the sweat of your brow. Well, if you won't, you won't; but 'tis my opinion that the man who fears his wife—in her absence—is deficient in the moral courage that every man who calls himself a man should possess! *I'm* a man! I look like a man, I speak like a man, I dress like a man, and if I'm not a man, why dam-me!

(Puts on his hat jauntily, and exit R., *through window* C.

Enter MRS. FLOWERDALE, C., *from* L.

Mrs. L. (L.) Mr. Balmer, I did not perceive you at first in the twilight.

George. (R., *starting up and meeting her.)* But you come like a bright vision to dispel the gloom, and wake my soul to rapture.

(He is about to take her hand; she repels him by a gesture.

Mrs. F. A truce with passionate heroics, if you please. The motive for my seeking this private interview is purely that of friendship.

George. Oh! ah! yes! highly flattered, I'm sure—hum! Friendship! oh, yes! very nice sort of sentiment for young ladies past fifty, but not for youngsters!

Mrs. F. As an early friend and attached schoolfellow of your wife, I am deeply interested in her happiness.

George. Oh, certainly, quite natural and beautiful those female attachments. I believe that Dora loves you as ardently as she does any person in the world.

Mrs. F. Except her husband.

George. Oh! ah! yes! 'Except her husband!' People imagine that a wife who yields to her husband in every particular must be devoted to him. Quite a mistake. Dora does not care a straw for me.

Mrs. F. How can you think so? Is she not the sweetest and most amiable disposition in the world—never opposes you in any way?

George. That's it. I like opposition sometimes; it's a proof that a wife takes an interest in you when she opposes you. The very sweetness of Dora's temper irritates me. Contrary to my nature, and, shall I confess it, to my affection for her, I have endeavored to provoke her to resistance by ungentle means. I pretend indifference to her tastes and contempt for her wishes. I have become a capricious tyrant at home, and a careless husband abroad. I have even gone so far—Heaven pardon me—as to kick her unoffending lap-dog —(MRS. FLOWERDALE *laughs)*—and, would you believe it, she did not fly in a passion. I meet neither sulks nor reproaches:—no frowns, no tears, nothing but that unvarying smile which proves that she has no feeling.

Mrs. F. Have you ever tried to make her jealous?

George. Well, I—I have ventured to the verge of that dangerous precipice, but the experiment failed; nothing could disturb her serenity.

Mrs. F. Because she trusted in you with implicit faith. Now I am going to betray my friend.

George. *You* betray her?

Mrs. F. To secure *her* happiness and yours. Lucy has confided to me a profound secret, which I have kept faithfully for five minutes. *(Confidentially.)* Neither your wife or Mr. Lambkin's has gone to London; their departure was merely a subterfuge, they have returned and remain here to decide a wager.

George. A wager—what wager?

Mrs. F. The merits of their respective systems of managing husbands. Hush! *(In a suppressed voice.)* Speak softly, I hear Dora in that room. *(Points to* S.E.R.) Do you think you could make love to me for five minutes. *(She sits* C.

George. *(Passionately.)* For eternity—thus on my knee—could I pour forth my soul in love and rapture!

(He drops on his knee R.C., *and seizing her hand, kisses it eagerly.*

Mrs. F. Very good, indeed; capitally acted! *(Laughs.)* But *all* acting!

George. (Aside.) Pshaw! I'm making a fool of myself.

(Rises. The door S.E.R. *opens:* MRS. BALMER *appears at it, and seems horror struck.* MRS. FLOWERDALE *perceives her.*

Mrs. F. (Aside to GEORGE, *detaining him.)* No, no, no, no! Go on—go on,—it couldn't be better.

(MRS. BALMER *totters from the door behind the screen without being seen by her husband.*

George. Then in what words shall I convince you of my love? Tell me that—that—you reciprocate my passion. *(Aside to* MRS. FLOWERDALE.) Is that warm enough? If not—only you put on the screw, and I'll give it you hotter!

Mrs. F. (Aside to GEORGE.) A little *more* ardor, if you can.

George. More ardor! Hard or soft, it's all the same to me! I am enraptured! *(Strikes an attitude.)* Incomparable woman! Best and loveliest of your sex, I lay my throbbing heart at your feet. *(Falls on both knees.)* Do as you like with it, trample on it, kick it, only love its owner! *(Aside.)* Is that hot enough?

Mrs. F. Oh, but your wife, Mr. Balmer—think of your wife.

George. My wife? Fiddle-de-dee! Oblige me by never mentioning her; it is you—you only, that I live for, you only that I could die for.

(A cry of suppressed agony, and a fall is heard behind the screen. GEORGE *and* MRS. FLOWERDALE *start up.*

George. Who is it?

(MRS. FLOWERDALE *rushes to the screen, dashes it down, and discovers* MRS. BALMER *extended on the floor in a swoon.*

Mrs. F. (R., *pointing to* MRS. BALMER.) Your wife—who has no feeling—who does not love you; there is the proof of both.

George. My dear Dora! Oh! I have wronged her cruelly by attributing to indifference the indulgence of a loving heart. Assist me, dear Mrs. Flowerdale, to bear her to her chamber, where I may explain and justify my conduct.

(They raise and support MRS. BALMER *into room,* S.E.R.

Enter MRS. LAMBKIN, *hurriedly, through* C. *window, from* R., *she is greatly agitated, and out of breath. She wears a hat, showy feathers, and complexion veil, instead of her bonnet.*

Mrs. L. Oh! Bless me, oh! I shall faint; I shall expire. I shall never recover the shock;—to be accosted and followed by my own husband, who did not know me in this hat of Lucy's. The wretch, too, was intoxicated, positively intoxicated. Oh! the blow is too heavy for my feeble frame.

(Sinks into easy chair L., *and covers her face with her handkerchief.*

Enter PETER LAMBKIN *through* C., *window, from* R., *his clothes are muddy, his coat buttoned awry, his trowsers torn at one knee, and his hat battered down upon his head. He is smoking a cigar.*

Peter. *(Singing.)* "For we are jolly good fellows;—we are—" ha! ha! ha! I wonder why that young party I ran against on the esplanade should have started off when I spoke to her. I've no doubt there was a pretty face under that pork-pie hat and complexion veil if I could only have seen it.

Mrs. L. *(Rising.)* Then see it now, sir.

Peter. *(Staggering up to her and looking curiously in her face.)* Ha! ha! ha! ha! *(Aside.)* By Jove—hic—it's mother Lambkin! *(Aloud.)* Mrs. Lambkin, can it be possible.

Mrs. L. Yes, sir, it *is* possible. It is too true. I am your *insulted* and indignant wife!

Peter. Oh! ho! ho! ho! What a lark! But where did you get that pork-pie hat and ravishing veil from, hey? It wasn't fair of you, my old gal, to impose upon *me*—hic—'pon my soul, it wasn't.

Mrs. L. You're intoxicated, *animal;* you're in a state of disgraceful inebriety, or you would never dare to address me as "your old gal." *(Cries.)* "My Peter!" to call me his "old gal;" oh, oh, oh!

Peter. *(Aside.)* I've been enjoying myself with a few friends. Who's afraid? Hic—I'm not! We'll make a night of it! *(Aloud.)* Fill the bumper fair—*(sings)*—for Britons never, never, never, never shall be slaves.

Mrs. L. Throw away that abominable cigar, you brute!

Peter. Hic—I sha'n't—hic—my popsy-wopsy!

Mrs. L. *(Imperiously.)* Peter Lambkin, I command you.

Peter. *(Doggedly.)* Mrs. Lambkin, I sha'n't obey you! I stand upon my native carpet, and my name—'tis Peter!

(Strikes an attitude.

Mrs. L. Retire this moment, sir, and go to bed!

Peter. *(Furiously.)* To bed! Ha! ha! I'll never go to bed any more. I'll follow the example of my friend, Balmer; I'll kick the dog. *(Kicking the footstool.)* I'll smash the china. *(Knocks over a china vase.)* I'll set fire to the house—hic—mother Lambkin give me a candle.

Mrs. L. *(Screams.)* Mother Lambkin, indeed!

Peter. Yes, *mother* Lambkin! *you* go to bed and look after all the little Lambkins.

Mrs. L. *(Screams.)* Oh, help! Murder! Oh, help!

(Drops into easy chair R., *screaming.*

Peter. *(Dropping into easy chair,* L.) Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!

Enter GEORGE BALMER, MRS. BALMER *and* MRS. FLOWERDALE, *from room* S.E.R., *followed by* LUCY, *with lighted candles—Lights up.*

George. } *Together.* { What is the matter?
Mrs. B. } { Good heavens! what has happened?

Peter. Nothing particular; only the British lion has been roused in my furious breast. *(Struts.)* I'm a free nigger, and my name is Peter—your Peter—*her* Peter—everybody's Peter!

Mrs. L. (L.) Oh, Mrs. Balmer, never was woman so deceived as I have been by that deceitful wretch, whom the law compels me to call *husband!*

Peter. Order! order! *(Crosses to* L.C.

Mrs. L. I can't tell you how I've been insulted and defied by a man whom I thought I *had* reduced to the most complete submission.

Peter. Of slavery! Hic—*(Sings)*—Britons never, never, never, never shall be slaves!

Mrs. B. You have lost your wager, Mrs. Lambkin; for your system of controling a husband by severity has been a failure.

Mrs. L. And pray, how has your system succeeded?

George. *I* can answer; it has made me the happiest, and most attached of husbands.

Mrs. F. *(Aside.)* Hem! hem! *(Aloud, significantly.)* It might have been otherwise.

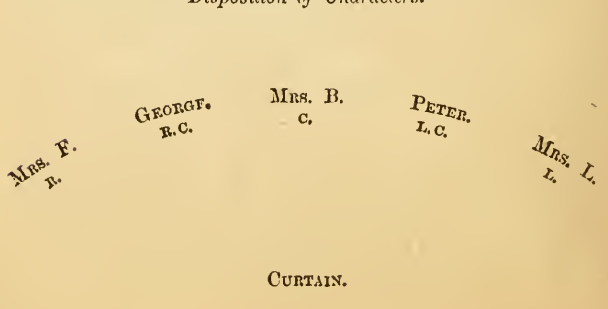
George. Ah! true; it might but for the assistance of a kind friend.

Mrs. F. Who perceived that in the married state the extremes of harshness or indulgence are alike dangerous.

Peter. Allow me to decide; if the roused lion may be permitted to do so, for he would then unquestionably say—that Peter has been a bad boy, but he now repents to his better half, and will never transgress again—that he will always love his popsy-wopsy.

Mrs. L. Then you shall be again—"MY PETER!"

Disposition of Characters.



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